



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

Summary of Washington Pacific Halibut Fisheries Management in 2009

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**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
SUMMARY OF PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN 2009**

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) management and enforcement activities in the 2009 Pacific halibut fisheries. It includes a synopsis of Washington’s recreational catch, a description of the results of the incidental halibut catch in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, and a summary of WDFW’s enforcement efforts relative to patrolling the North Coast (Neah Bay and La Push) recreational halibut fisheries (Appendix A).

Washington’s Recreational Halibut Fisheries in 2009

Washington’s halibut fisheries are managed under the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A. The catch sharing plan specifies how the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC) as defined by IPHC is allocated or “shared” among various state commercial and recreational sectors. For Washington, WDFW manages its recreational fisheries by subarea. These subareas are:

1. Puget Sound (inside waters east of the Sekiu River, including Puget Sound)
 - Eastern Region (inner Sound waters east of Low Point)
 - Western Region (Strait waters west of Low Point)
2. North Coast (waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca west of the Sekiu River and Pacific Ocean waters south to the Queets River)
3. South Coast (Pacific Ocean waters south of the Queets River to Leadbetter Point)
4. Columbia River (Pacific Ocean waters south of Leadbetter Point to Cape Falcon, Oregon)

A summary of Washington’s recreational halibut seasons for 2009 is described in Table 1.

Table 1.

Subarea	Quota (lbs)	Catch (lbs)	Avg Wt (lbs)	Season Dates
Puget Sound	57,393	114,050	21.00	West: May 21-July 3 East: April 23-June 5
North Coast	108,030	102,782	21.1	May 14, 16, 21, 23 June 4, 6
South Coast	42,739	39,595	19.4	Primary: May 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 24, 31 June 7,14,21,28 Nearshore: May 7- Sept. 27 Thu-Sun
Columbia River ^{1/}	15,735	9,497	24.4	Early: May 1, 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 29; Late: Aug 7- Sept 27 Fri-Sun

^{1/} Columbia River harvest is Washington catch only.

Halibut are measured at the dock and the lengths of the samples are then converted to weights. On the coast, lengths are taken throughout the season on a weekly basis and applied to the number of halibut caught to project the total catch in pounds. The catches are then monitored and the fisheries are closed when they are projected to attain their respective subarea quota.

North Coast Subarea

Changes in the season structure for the North Coast subarea in 2009 were primarily focused on providing better notification of fishery closures and re-openings resulting from inseason quota management. Two weeks were identified pre-season that the halibut fishery would be closed in order to monitor quota attainment and to provide advanced notice when potential openings would occur if sufficient quota remained. The May-June quota split was eliminated to address an increasing trend of May quota being transferred to June, and the number of days per week that the fishery is open was reduced from three (Tue, Thur, and Sat) to two (Thur and Sat) staggered days per week. Table 2 shows that even with the elimination of the quota split, a reasonable amount of quota was available for fishing opportunity in early June.

Table 2. North Coast recreational halibut quota divisions and catches in May and June, 2006-09.

	N. Coast Quota	May Quota (72%)	May Catch	May lbs. Remaining	June Quota (28%)	June lbs. Available	Actual June %
2009	108,030	N/A	67,058	N/A	N/A	35,724	33%
2008	109,992	79,194	71,811	7,383	30,798	38,181	35%
2007	116,199	83,663	66,430	17,233	32,536	49,769	43%
2006	119,244	85,856	63,397	22,459	33,388	55,847	47%

South Coast Subarea

Similar to the North Coast subarea, changes to the South Coast subarea for 2009 were intended to increase the length of the season and to provide for sufficient notification of closures and re-openings while allowing time for catch accounting. To accomplish that, the days that the primary season were open were changed from two days per week (Sun and Tue) during entire season to being open for two days per week for the first two weeks of the primary season then one day per week (Sun only) for the remainder of the season. The switch to one day per week provided for adequate time to monitor quota attainment and provide advance notice of closure.

In 2008, the nearshore set aside was 10% of the sub-area quota but only a small portion of the set-aside was used resulting in a significant amount of the subarea quota left unharvested. In 2009, to ensure that the majority of the quota is available for the primary offshore fishery the nearshore set aside was revised to be 10% of the sub-area quota or 2,000 pounds, whichever is less. Keeping the 10% specified allows for the set aside to be proportionally reduced if the Area 2A and, subsequently, the South Coast quota is reduced.

Columbia River Subarea

The only change to the structure of the Columbia River subarea for the 2009 season was to revise the primary season to from seven days per week to three days per week (Thur, Fri, Sat). The change was proposed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as way to minimize the amount of time between the primary and late seasons. The late season fishery continued to be open three days per week (Fri, Sat, Sun) starting August 1.

Puget Sound Subarea

WDFW continues to struggle with its management of the Puget Sound halibut fishery. Given the size of the area and the number of access points, WDFW's sampling of the area is not as robust as it is in coastal areas. Catch and effort data collected through port sampling and a telephone survey are sufficient for monitoring long-term trends, but not for quota management purposes. Using those data to generate point estimates result in catches that are highly imprecise and can vary greatly from year-to-year, making it difficult to adaptively manage the fishery.

In 2008, WDFW's catch estimate for the Puget Sound halibut fishery exceeded the quota for the subarea by 40%. To try to ensure that did not happen again, WDFW used that high catch rate to calculate the number season days for 2009. Using the 2008 data and applying the "fishing equivalent day" (FED) calculation; the number of FEDs available for the 2009 fishery was 52, down from 76 for the 2008 fishery. This amounted to a reduction in the fishing season by approximately three weeks. Therefore, we were stunned to learn that this year's catch estimate had exceeded the quota by over 98%.

WDFW produced a post-season catch estimate using data from creel surveys of anglers returning to port to estimate the catch per angler-trip and overall effort and a phone survey of all license holders to expand the data for non-sampled boats. WDFW samplers measured halibut intercepted at the docks to determine the average weight. This method produced a catch estimate of 5,431 halibut; multiplied by the average weight (21.00 lbs) results in a total estimated catch of 114,050 lbs. The division of this catch between the two regions for 2009, and a comparison to previous seasons is described in Table 3. A detailed summary of the Puget Sound catch is provided in Appendix B.

Table 3. Puget Sound catch estimates, by region, for 2006-09.

Area	2009		2008		2007		2006	
	# Halibut	lbs	# Halibut	lbs	# Halibut	lbs	# Halibut	lbs
Eastern Region	3,622	76,104	2,371	50,530	1,215	27,626	2,480	57,635
Western Region	1,808	37,947	1,537	32,775	783	17,798	247	5,740
Total	5,431	114,050	3,907	83,304	1,998	45,424	2,727	63,375

WDFW will examine the Puget Sound halibut catch data further and develop a more conservative method for setting the 2010 season. Following the annual meeting of the International Pacific Halibut Commission and the adoption of the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC), WDFW will communicate the new methodology and the proposed season dates; these dates will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service for approval.

Canadian Halibut Landed Into Neah Bay

As part of WDFW's port sampling efforts for recreational halibut fisheries, we also sample the halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay. The number of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay totaled 1,609 for 2009; this is about one third of the amount that was landed in 2008. The amount of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay has decreased significantly since 2007 likely due to increasing restrictions implemented by the Department of

Fisheries and Oceans Canada on recreational halibut regulations and licensing requirements for the waters adjacent to Neah Bay.

Table 4. is a summary of the Canadian halibut catch landed into Neah Bay for 2000-2009. A weekly catch summary of Canadian halibut brought into Neah Bay by charter and private vessels (in numbers of fish) is described in Appendix B.

Table 4. Canadian halibut landings into Neah Bay, Washington, in 2000-2009.

Year	# Boats	# Anglers	# Halibut
2009	624	1,956	1,609
2008	834	3,412	4,778
2007	1,579	6,820	9,977
2006	1,863	8,223	13,045
2005	1,446	5,515	8,816
2004	1,468	5,941	9,693
2003	1,555	6,089	10,805
2002	1,328	5,361	9,027
2001	1,594	6,202	9,716
2000	2,007	6,857	10,088

Incidental Halibut Catch in the 2009 Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis, WA

The 2A Halibut Catch Sharing Plan provides for incidental landings of halibut in the primary longline sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, Washington, in years when the Area 2A TAC is greater than 900,000 lbs. The primary directed sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis will be allocated the Washington sport allocation that is in excess of 214,110 lb, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available. The amount of halibut allowed in the directed sablefish fishery is capped at 70,000 lbs; any remaining allocation is transferred back to the Washington recreational fishery and divided among the subareas according to the methodology described in the Plan. The 2009 area 2A TAC was 950,000 pounds and the Washington sport allocation was 226,005 leaving 11,895 for incidental halibut landings in the longline sablefish fishery. To address the much lower halibut quota, the Council adopted a 100 pound per landing limit on halibut regardless of the amount of sablefish on board (both dressed weight, halibut with head-on). The sablefish fishery extends from April 1 through October 31 with associated halibut landings allowed beginning in May. Fishers were also allowed up to two additional halibut per fishing trip to provide some flexibility in complying with the regulation.

Seventeen vessels made a total of 79 landings containing halibut in the directed tier-limit sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis. The total catch of dressed, head-off halibut in the directed sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis at the conclusion of the fishery on October 31 was 6,154 pounds which is 52% of the established quota. This final total is 85% below the halibut

landed in the tier limit fishery in 2008. The incidental halibut landings in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis from 2004-2009 are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Incidental Halibut in the Sablefish Fishery North of Pt. Chehalis

Year	Vessels	Landings	Quota	Catch	% of Quota
2009	17	79	11,895	6,154	51.7%
2008	36	58	70,000	39,729	56.8%
2007	24	84	70,000	45,780	65.4%
2006	27	130	70,000	64,624	92.3%
2005	27	124	70,000	68,013	97.2%
2004	30	148	70,000	67,837	96.9%

Summary

WDFW plans to continue to monitor and sample our recreational and commercial fisheries, including the amount of halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay; take a more precautionary approach when setting our Puget Sound season; maintain our enforcement efforts during the halibut recreational fisheries; and monitor the efforts to document halibut bycatch in the West Coast trawl fisheries and recommend appropriate action through the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Statewide Marine Division has conducted concentrated enforcement activities around the recreational halibut season along the north coast for the past several years. The 2009 season was no exception. Enforcement patrols were designed to address Washington's halibut rules and offer a level of protection for other species that can be encountered while pursuing halibut, particularly yelloweye and canary rockfish that are designated as overfished. Additionally, cross-border activities associated with Washington residents fishing in Canada were monitored.

Concurrent enforcement activities that occurred during the 2009 halibut patrols included, but were not limited to: (1) ensuring compliance with the recreational and commercial Rockfish Conservation Area closures; (2) enforcing canary and yelloweye rockfish no-retention rules in the recreational fishery; (3) monitoring and maintaining compliance with Canadian-caught halibut landings; (4) enforcing rules of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary; (5) monitoring vessel safety compliance; and (6) ensuring compliance with general groundfish regulations.

The following is a summary of patrol activities directed at Washington's 2009 north coast recreational halibut fishery.

May 14 & 16, 2009 Opener

This year's recreational halibut emphasis patrol was coined "Operation Yellow Eye". As in past years, this effort was organized to address issues surrounding the opening of the recreational halibut season. Due to halibut grounds being closely associated with locations where yelloweye rockfish can be found, enforcement of areas closed to protect this species was a priority during the halibut fishery. The weather conditions were relatively fair, which provided for good fishing conditions for halibut anglers.

Patrols designed around halibut season openers included enforcement staff from WDFW, NMFS, USCG, and Clallam County Sheriff's Office. The operation was scaled back this season compared to others due to a high compliance rate, a split season opener, and competing resource protection needs. Enforcement coverage included dock patrols at Neah Bay, one WDFW patrol vessel out of La Push, two WDFW and one Clallam County patrol vessels out of Neah Bay, and two USCG helicopter flights out of Port Angeles.

The first two-day opener resulted in a three-fold increase in angler activity in these ports. Officers conducted 1,309 angler checks and discovered 265 violations. Violations include a number of halibut and non-halibut offenses.

May 21 & 23, 2009 Opener

The second two-day opener resulted in a substantially reduced effort with 317 inspections made and 25 violations being detected. A slightly reduced enforcement presence was deployed compared to the first opener.

2009 Activity Summary:

	Anglers Contacted	Violations	Citations	Warnings
Week One (5/14 – 5/16)	1,309	265	114	151
Week Two (5/21 – 5/23)	317	25	3	22
TOTALS	1,626	290	117	173

Opening Weekend Comparisons:

YEAR	Anglers Contacted	Violations	% Compliance
2007	1,057	110	89.6%
2008	424	38	91.0%
2009	1,309	265	79.8%
Avg.	930	137.7	85.2%

ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC HALIBUT DIRECTED PATROLS**June 4 & 6, 2009:**

Officers Fairbanks and Peterson conducted a boat patrol in Marine Areas 4 and 5, with an emphasis on the areas west (Blue Dot) and north (Swiftsure Bank) of Tatoosh Island. During the patrol a number of violations were addressed, which included possession of halibut closed season, gear violations, license violations, and failure to record catch.

June 18 & 20, 2009:

Officers Fairbanks, Miller, and Peterson continued working a detachment emphasis on the recreational halibut and commercial salmon troll season by conducting boat patrols in MCRAs 3 and 4. During the patrol a number of areas of concern were addressed. They included a 20-fathom restriction in place for recreational groundfish anglers, Rockfish Conservation Area, the Cape Flattery Control Zone, and the Quillayute/Makah tribal U&A (Usual & Accustomed Fishing Grounds) boundary. During the patrol enforcement contacts included several tribal and non-tribal trollers, one tribal trawler, and one non-tribal commercial crab fisher. Several of the non-tribal vessels were boarded, and their licenses, gear, and catch were inspected, with a minor violation detected.

At the conclusion of the boat patrol Officers Miller and Fairbanks recognized that the favorable weather (and water) conditions allowed for most of the small open-access groundfish vessels to get out of La Push and fish. The following day they conducted an inspection of the wholesale fish buyer who purchases the open-access catch of black cod. Officers Miller and Fairbanks found the average off-loads were less than 50 lbs., which is less than a third of their allowed daily catch limit. During the inspection, an off-load of black cod occurred which included several cod and one dogfish.

Efforts in addition to directed patrols:

Throughout the summer of 2009, Detachment Eight officers dedicated a significant amount of time patrolling the north coast of Washington state and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Most of the activity was centered on the selective fishery salmon season; however, all aspects of fisheries enforcement to include halibut protection, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary enforcement, vessel safety, and all other laws of the state were addressed.

Appendix B.

Table 1. Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay in 2009, by week and fishing mode.

Stat Week	(dates)	Charter			Private			Total		
		Boats	Anglers	Halibut	Boats	Anglers	Halibut	Boats	Anglers	Halibut
17	4/20-4/26	0	0	0	1	4	0	1	4	0
18	4/27-5/3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	5/4-5/10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	5/11-5/17	4	25	20	12	29	40	16	54	60
21	5/18-5/24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	5/25-5/31	0	0	0	8	17	12	8	17	12
23	6/1-6/7	2	8	5	7	27	15	9	35	20
24	6/8-6/14	6	36	16	3	7	9	9	43	25
25	6/15-6/21	7	45	42	23	63	48	30	108	90
26	6/22-6/28	7	47	43	22	62	37	29	109	80
27	6/29-7/5	3	19	13	65	181	141	68	200	154
28	7/6-7/12	9	64	43	38	113	85	47	177	128
29	7/13-7/19	8	52	41	52	110	107	60	162	148
30	7/20-7/26	2	15	12	23	83	52	25	98	64
31	7/27-8/2	3	25	25	56	147	136	59	172	161
32	8/3-8/9	2	16	16	62	174	135	64	190	151
33	8/10-8/16	4	30	26	93	274	257	97	304	283
34	8/17-8/23	4	32	30	33	88	47	37	120	77
35	8/24-8/30	2	16	16	40	87	112	42	103	128
36	8/31-9/6	0	0	0	6	18	5	6	18	5
37	9/7-9/13	0	0	0	12	32	10	12	32	10
38	9/14-9/21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
39	9/22-9/27	0	0	0	3	5	5	3	5	5
40	9/28-10/4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	10/5-10/11	0	0	0	2	5	8	2	5	8
42	10/12-10/18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
43	10/19-10/25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	10/26-10/31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		63	430	348	561	1526	1261	624	1956	1609

Appendix C.

Table 1. 2009 Puget Sound halibut catch estimates, by area and month.

Area	Month	Number of Halibut	Pounds of Halibut
5	May	689	14,469
	June	1022	21,462
	July	96	2,016
	Aug	0	0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>1,808</i>	<i>37,947</i>
6	April	1,264	26,544
	May	1,394	29,274
	June	239	5,019
	<i>Total</i>	<i>2,897</i>	<i>60,837</i>
7	April	146	3,066
	May	117	2,457
	June	152	3,192
	<i>Total</i>	<i>416</i>	<i>8,715</i>
8	May	2	42
	<i>Total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>42</i>
9	April	285	5,985
	May	19	399
	June	6	126
	<i>Total</i>	<i>310</i>	<i>6,510</i>
<i>Grand Total</i>		<i>5,431</i>	<i>114,050</i>

Table 2. Puget Sound halibut catches (numbers of fish), by month, for 2006-09.

Month	2006	2007	2008	2009
April	1,331	344	1,269	1,695
May	433	582	1,222	2,221
June	797	710	1,027	1,419
July	153	357	390	96
Aug	13	6	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>2,727</i>	<i>1,998</i>	<i>3,907</i>	<i>5,431</i>